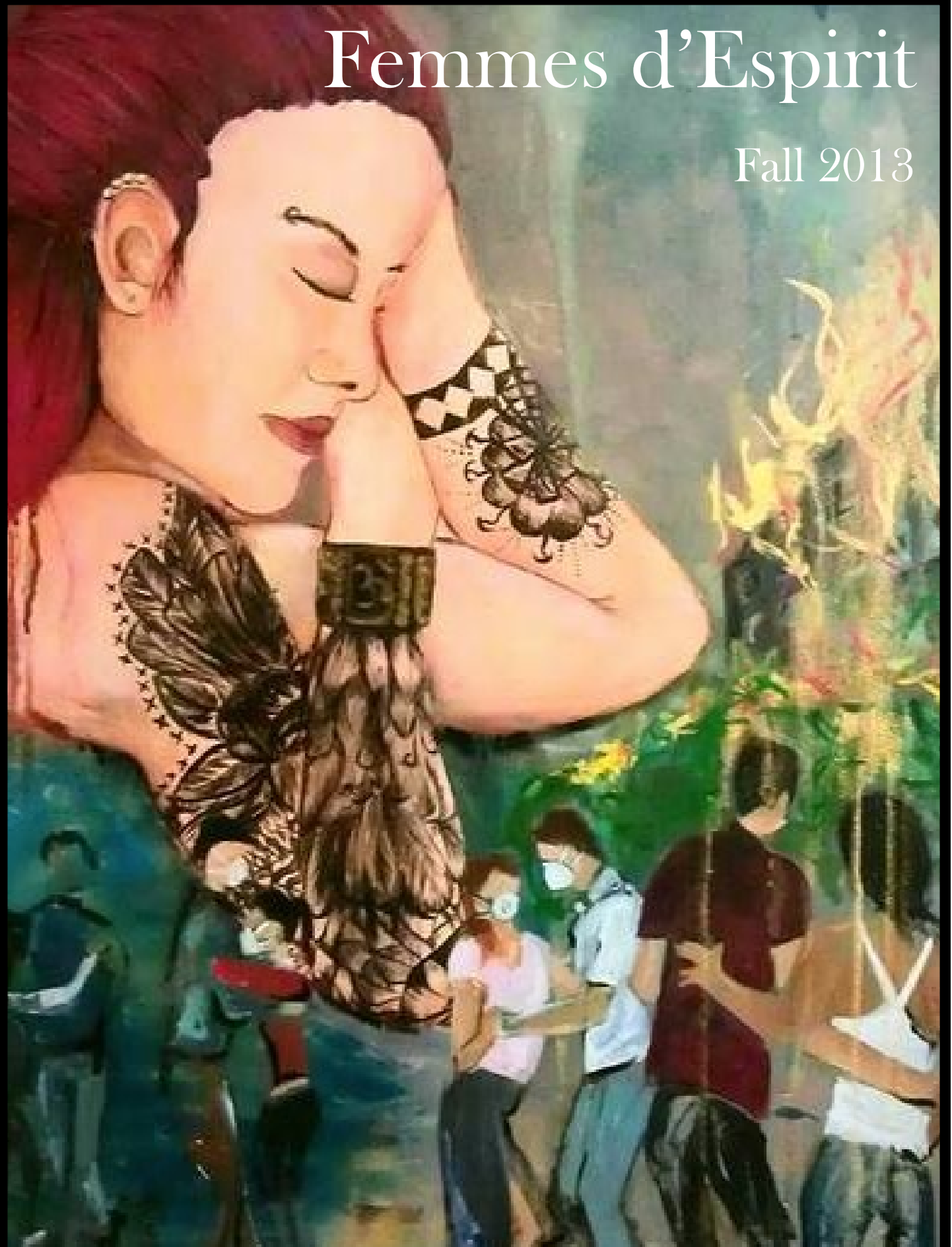


Femmes d'Esprit

Fall 2013



About the Cover

Magdalena Fin '15, Cover Artist

In my current painting series, I juxtapose images that are not normally associated with each other and yet happen simultaneously around the world. While watching the news recently, I found it interesting that we have many ways of finding out what goes on in the rest of the world and yet we can just switch the channel at any time, disconnecting ourselves from the events that we believe are irrelevant to our lives. The series is called "Coexist" because that is what all beings on this planet should strive to do. War and peace go on simultaneously, dances and funerals happen at the same time just in different places. In my series, the disturbing and the comforting images come together giving the pieces a dream-like quality.



Letter from the Editor

This has been quite the year so far for me. Sometimes I have to stop and ask myself if I am remembering to breathe. Obviously I am. This is my victory lap here at CNR. That's year number five. Some people would call me a Super Senior. I have concluded that there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Life does not always give you a clear path; there are tough decisions to be made, time that has to be taken off, personal problems that have to be sorted out; and if I'm anything like a regular person, I certainly was not given a clear path. At the end of the Fall semester of my sophomore year I considered dropping out of college, then I decided that maybe I needed to transfer, and then finally I settled on attending school part-time.

My part-time semester tested my commuting stamina as I traveled from Madison, CT to New Rochelle, NY almost every day. I really grew apart from CNR; I lost contact with my friends, almost by choice; I burnt some bridges. By the end of that semester I was completely exhausted. I was unhappy with my education, I wanted to pursue my dream of becoming a NYC singer/songwriter. Then that summer I injured my arm playing guitar, my mental health started to decline, it was looking to be a financially challenging future — could I afford to even attend college anymore? — and I started to lose weight rapidly and not in the right way. "Why?" was my biggest question. So I took a semester off and decided to make a decision after I had some time to relax. I signed the paperwork securing my spot at the school, and breathed deeply. I would get through this.

And I did. I returned to CNR full-time, taking "Rise and Fall of the American Teenager," "Singer/Songwriter," "The Heroine," and "Intro to Sociology." I switched my major to English, gained back all that weight I lost (and then some...whoops!), and felt that yes, college is for me, college is what I want, and I am going to finish it because I want to finish it.

But after working the 2013 graduation at Radio City Music Hall, to see the people I entered college with walk across that stage without me really stung. I went on Facebook and saw the happy graduation photos of high school acquaintances and old friends. My self-esteem plunged. That semester off didn't seem like such a good idea anymore. The following week was my "vacation" time. CNR Drama decided to produce *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* over the summer so there was work to be done on that, I would be turning 22 on July 4th, and I would be studying abroad in France for a month in August. Were these not things I wanted to do? Did I not want to be active in CNR Drama, live another year, and take a leap of faith and study abroad? Yes, I wanted to do all of these things. I was filled with such passion for my education and to be active on campus.

So when I saw yet another picture of a friend who

graduated from Hofstra, I told myself that if I had not taken that semester off, I would not have survived college. So no, that semester off didn't seem like such a good idea anymore — it was the smartest decision I could have ever made.

There is no rush; no matter how people may push you to finish your college education, you have to think about yourself and how you operate. If you are unhappy with your area of study, change it! If you become ill, take time to heal. Talk to your advisors about your options — they are there to *advise* you. Heaven knows I wouldn't have pushed through without the help and compassion of my advisors. And first years, if you feel angry next year, as one of my advisors told me, "Good! You're supposed to feel angry your sophomore year!" You aren't weird for being unhappy or confused. You are perfectly normal. A college education is supposed to rock your world anyway, give you new ideas about yourself, your belief system, new techniques to maneuver around challenges. Don't feel that there is one path you have to follow, and only one way to follow it, because, to put it simply, life happens. And sometimes life happens in a way you don't want it to.

We all know this.

We can only prepare ourselves so much for change. Part of change is its spontaneity and the realization that some things are beyond your control. But what is in your control is how you cope with that change. My advice for you, fellow Honors students, is not to be afraid to step back, give yourself time to reassess circumstances. There is no weakness in endurance! Endure. And don't let anyone make you feel you are anything lesser for turning around and choosing another path. The energy spent towards achieving a fulfilling education is worth the clean slate.

Amelia Ellis, SAS '14

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Mr. Daniel Smith

What Has Honors Been Up To?

September:

- ♦ Welcomed nine first-year students to the Honors Program
- ♦ Launched the new seminar “American Anxiety,” taught by *New York Times* bestselling author Daniel Smith
- ♦ Welcomed back senior **Kayla Cummings** as Resident Advisor of the Honors Living and Learning Community in Ursula Hall
- ♦ Elected new members to the Honors Board
- ♦ Installed a new Smart Interactive learning center in the Lower Lounge of the Honors LLC, which now hosts the Friday sessions of Honors 110: The First Year Experience

October:

- ♦ Students began brainstorming proposals for the upcoming NRHC conference, which will take place in Niagara Falls next April
- ♦ The college recognized many Honors students at the Honors Convocation during Family Weekend for a range of scholarships, as well as Honors and Dean’s list
- ♦ Senior **Regina Alvarado** gave the benediction at Honors Convocation and played violin
- ♦ The first Honors Board meeting took place
- ♦ The schedule of classes for the spring, 2014 semester were announced
- ♦ Sophomore **Meagan Yoeono** ran a personal best at the Hudson Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Cross Country Championship, helping the team place 5th overall

November:

- ♦ Senior **Amelia Ellis** took the reigns of CNR Drama’s production of *Ragtime* as stage manager, with a number of Honors students working both behind-the-scenes and on stage
- ♦ Honors students attended the new musical, *Little Miss Sunshine*, in New York City
- ♦ **Katy Baudendistal** and **Michelle Goyke** submitted proposals to the NRHC conference for spring, 2014.
- ♦ Members of Dr. Sue Canning’s Honors colloquium take in an exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum.



Provost Dr. Dorothy Escribano (left) presents Honors senior Regina Alvarado (right) with an award at this year’s Honors Convocation



Sophomores Meagan Yoeono (left) and Katy Baudendistal (right) at the Activities Fair in October at the Sweeny Student Center.

Honors Matters: Stop Calling it Homework

Dr. Amy Bass, Professor of History and Honors Program Director

"I hate that phrase 'the real world.' Why is an aircraft factory more real than a university? Is it?"

- Richard Hugo, The Triggering Town

One of my biggest pet peeves about commencement speeches (or just about any other speech given to college students) aside from the seemingly never-ending flow of platitudes and superlatives is the moment when the speaker pauses to tell students that they are about to enter "The Real World."

Where have you been all this time if not in The Real World?

College is The Real World. If you are a resident student, you are responsible for getting yourself up and making yourself presentable, getting to class on time, working with your peers, and living with someone you may or may not like very much. If you are a commuter, you have to negotiate traffic, plan your day, park, and stay firmly within campus life despite not spending every waking moment here. As students, all of you are tasked with learning, communicating, and performing. You have assignments to complete, requirements to fulfill, and – many of you – a work-life balance to figure out. Being a student is a wonderful thing: you are investing in your future, learning new things, experiencing changes to your world view, and finding different paths that will enable you to get where you want to go. There is a reason, to be sure, that platitudes are used so often in commencement speeches: a successful college experience leads to these kinds of accomplishments.

But to say it isn't "real" is to fail to understand just how difficult it all is. There is never a part of life that isn't in the real world. I am shocked, for example, by the amount of homework that my first grader brings home on a nightly basis. Math worksheets with the word ALGEBRA across the top, a word I don't think I encountered until at least 7th grade. Language Arts assignments that include studying for weekly spelling tests, writing stories, and figuring out the differences between nouns and action words. Not to mention a mandatory thirty-minute reading period each evening, to be logged in a "Reading Journal" that is turned in on the last day of every month. Add to this Girl Scout meetings, the weekly violin lesson, tennis clinic on Fridays, and the Saturday soccer game. Tell the six-year-old that she isn't living in "The Real World" as she tries to find time to, well, play. It seems all too real to me.

So how do we better understand the life of a student as something that is "real", rather than an extended waiting period that transitions a child into an adult? As college students, you can craft your own perceptions of what kind of world you inhabit, and how you would like others to perceive that world. Take command of how others perceive you as you take command of how you perceive yourself. Indeed, I cringe every time I hear a student refer to an assignment, whether it be a reading, or a paper, or an exam, as "homework" and I wonder if that is part of the problem of this perception. It is your work: it is not only part of who you are now, it is part of who you will someday be. Treat it as such, and perhaps the college world will seem all the real-er to others.

"Anxiety in America"

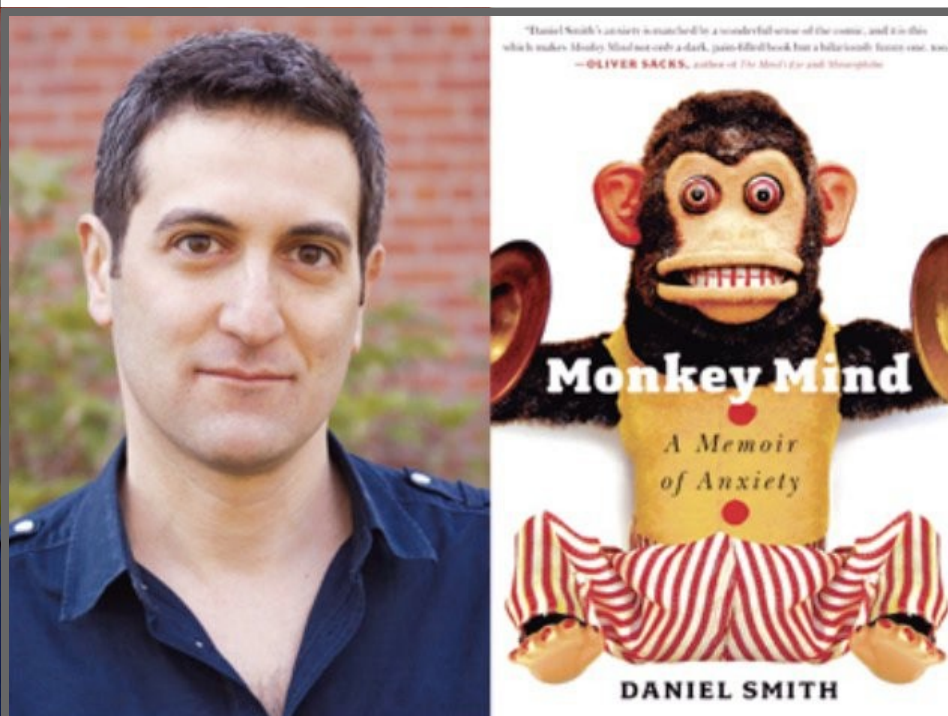
Daniel Smith, Critchlow Chair in English

There are times (ideally, they're all like this) when teaching gives you the opportunity to advance and complicate your understanding of a subject on which you're supposed to be a Renowned Expert. Sometimes these advances and complications come unexpectedly — because you're sitting around with a group of interesting people with interesting things to say, and you're willing to listen and change your mind and be surprised. Other times, the advances and complications come because you *want* them to come. You have designed your course as a sort of engraved invitation for advances and complications. You have set the table, bought flowers, put the chardonnay on ice. You don't want to be a Renowned Expert. Renowned Experts are self-satisfied, pompous, self-deluded, inert. You live in New York; you've met many Renowned Experts. They always seem a little bloodless and starched, not quite human.

"American Anxiety," which I am teaching in the Honors Program this fall, is an engraved-invitation kind of course. I decided to teach it because while I have written and spoken a great deal about anxiety, particularly over the past couple of years, much of that writing and speaking has been based on a premise I no longer consider quite adequate. Call it the Existential Premise. It holds that to speak of anxiety in anything other than subjective terms — as something personal and embodied, a coloration in the way a person thinks, feels, and acts — is somehow not true to the phenomenon, and that, therefore, the best way to capture the meaning of anxiety is to describe in detail how anxiety interacts with all the stuff that makes up a life: growing up, learning, working, fighting, laughing, loving, hating, etc. This stance considers anxiety as an emotion first and foremost, and does not admit much in the way of sociological or political thinking. It shrinks from considering anxiety as a phenomenon characteristic of certain eras or nations. It's far more interested in phenomenology than culture.

I still see the value in this approach to the topic, but over time I have also come to accept its limitations and to ask new and thorny questions about anxiety. As far back as Tocqueville, observers have detected a nervous, unstable quality to American civilization. And in the nineteenth century, observers began to claim there was something *prototypically* nervous about American civilization. People began to refer to an epidemic of "American nervousness" and, later, to ours as an "Age of Anxiety." What evidence supported these claims? What observations and concerns led them to be made in the first place? Do we live in an inherently nervous-making time and place? If so, what specific elements of American life are the likeliest culprits?

I designed "American Anxiety" in order to address these questions, less in the expectation that they could be answered in a definitive way than in the belief that the simple but dedicated act of pursuing answers would be illuminating. And I sought out texts that would address the array of potential factors contributing to a presumptive "culture of anxiety." These texts ended up spanning more than a century, from the neurologist George Beard's controversial 1881 book on the causes and consequences of American anxiety, to Freud on the tenuousness of civilization's safeguards and comforts, to John Hersey on the atomic bomb, to Joan Didion on the dark side of the counterculture, to Don DeLillo's masterful satire on mass commercial culture, to Robert Putnam on the decline of "social capital" in postwar America, and beyond. With every text, and with every class discussion, the goal would be to investigate the "complex dynamic between large social, cultural, and political forces" and the more personal, existential aspects of anxiety that had been my starting point.



As I'd hoped and expected, the discussions have been vibrant, engaging, and, not least of all, useful. My hope was that the students in the class would not just be compelled by the material but that the course would give them the tools to look at certain aspects of their culture in a new and clearer light — that our inquiries would help them to see their surroundings more sharply and with a more critical eye. Through their reading, their conversations in class and out, and their assignments, they would find themselves looking anew at the roles that consumerism, commercialism, and technology (to name just a few of the forces under consideration) play in their lives. And at the same time so, of course, would I.

Daniel Smith is the New York Times bestselling author of Monkey Mind: A Memoir of Anxiety.

Blue Angel Productions

Holly Bogardus, '16

Blue Angel Productions is one of the schools newest clubs. Under the department of Communication Arts, its focus is digital media production. However, as older students and most faculty know, this is not the first incarnation of the organization.

Let me start this tale from the beginning. In the Spring of 2013, I participated in Dr. Quinn's "TV Studio" class. The class was the learning of how to run a TV Studio



Bogardus (left) with President Huntington and BAP executive board member

and the making of newscasts. Throughout the semester, students asked why there was no club for this. Dr. Quinn's response was simple, "if you want one, then make one".

And that was what I did. After months of paperwork and cancelled approval meetings, *Blue Angel Productions* was finally born in April of 2013. This was not easy, but the hardest struggle of all was that of naming the group. As mentioned, there have been at least two attempts at creating this group, both of which had failed.

The original idea had been to use the last name of the most recent attempt for the club. This I refused with no leniency. I wanted this to be something that I did. Something I created. Not a phoenix born from the ashes of its past, but of a completely new creature, a newborn baby of my own make and genes.

The final decision of the name "*Blue Angel Productions*" was decided also on the mission. All previous names (Montage Media and Blue Angels Media) utilized on the word "media" Now, this is perfectly all right, and even to have been expected. It is a large umbrella term for anything and everything the group could possibly want to do within itself. However, in my mind at least, Production seemed a better focal point.

Instead of the frantic consumerism that is all things media, I want for students to create for themselves more so than for others. The production is a creative process, just as therapeutic as tradition medium of art on canvas. Anyone who has watched a good film to lift his or her moods knows this to some extent. But there is a beauty and a power in creating such things for yourself. Lighting, camera angles, camera movement, script, costumes, props, all of the things that must be thought of and go into the production. It is to create something that no one can ever recreate exactly. The ability to control what people see and hear, and to some extent, think. Unlike artistic forms of the past film and video allows motion and less static and more engulfing of all senses.

BAP is also designed both for the collaboration of the group as well as the individuals ideals. Group meetings allow for thoughts to be shared openly and work to be done in a comfortable environment. Student are also allowed and encouraged to take cameras and shoot things for themselves, however they wish, as individual projects. In lieu of the traditional "executive board" meeting, the club allows for all members to be present. This grants more exchanges of ideas, as well as allows the reasons for the denial of some projects to be voiced openly. The avoiding of secrets and of the delusions of power are highly important in regards to the running of the club, of which I hope these ideas become inspirations to other groups on campus for the bettering of the organizations and the school as a whole.

A wish is also to defy the self-containment that is the basis of many other organizations. That is, to branch out from ourselves. We do not wish to keep all members locked inside the TV studio, nor do we expect them to always have a camera in their hands. We enjoy and find it beneficial to take students off-campus, going to museums and experiencing, analyzing, and appreciating the cultural and societal benefits of communication and film throughout history. All are encouraged to remain involved in the community as a whole.

I think the interest and excitement in the club speaks for these thoughts. I had originally thought that many Communication majors would be heavily involved in the club, a co-curricular activity for their resumes. But the most involved and eager students range from studio art to biology. In fact, the amount of science majors is almost alarming. This however demonstrates its power as a creative outlet. For students focused on the sciences and what is factual and minuet and tangible, BAP allows for them to create. To be artistic without the traditional need of skills with neither paintbrush nor pencil.

It is my hope that this club will remain for however long the school remains. That is should be a warm environment for the fostering of creation and expression.



Follow on Twitter
@CNR_Productions

What is Femininity?

As constructed by the needs and desires of the oppressive class

Lee-Anne Daley, '15

Femininity is secret

We hide our boobs

We shove down our lust

And we stow young women away into dark
corners filled with expectations

Without explanations or discussions

Victoria's secret is that she is female

Women who are strong should be subdued

And condemned for being too loud, **too bold**

Too ready to call on the bullshit of everyday life.

Femininity? What is it?

Femininity is hiding

Hiding how you feel for that special someone

Hiding that special someone

Hiding **from** that special someone

Femininity is kind an patient

In a cruel and unforgiving world

We forgive those that hurt us

But when our transgressions are called into
question

We crumble under the debasing statements and ac-
cusations

We wilt like the flowers we so freely

And mistakenly thought was ours to give

We are owned

Not by ourselves but by those who wish to
control us

We possess not rights but the right to be

objectified.

And we are expected to thank the definers

The providers of these gracious titles

They expect thanks and for what?

Thanks for doing a job, something that already com-
pensates for duties performed?

An act that would have been done regardless of it
was needed by another person?

Thank you, for your presumptions and entitlement

We are expected to thank and smile- to show our
pretty faces

To open our hearts and to be pleasing to the senses

Thank. You. For. Nothing.

Woman- the "lesser" sex

The 'fairer' gender

More **gentle**, more **fragile**, more **weak**.

One day femininity will be strength

Strength for being able. A symbol of strength and
not one full of qualifications.

Being able to give birth is a blessing but not a defini-
tion

Being able to wear clothes without judgment

Being able to walk at any time, in any state and not
be in danger.

Being able to succeed at the same level with the
same reward.

Femininity will be free of definitions from those no
longer relevant.

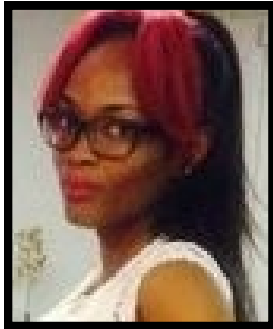
Welcome Class of 2017

2017



Colleen Baudendistel, Biology and Mathematics

My name is Colleen Baudendistel, and I am majoring in Biology and minoring in Mathematics. After achieving my Bachelor's Degree, I intend to enter the final two years of a Physician Assistant program (and become a Physician Assistant specializing in Dermatology), or attend medical school in hopes to become a Dermatologist. I grew up in a rural community just outside of the city of Binghamton, NY and attended a small Catholic school in Binghamton, where I was involved in various clubs and devoted a large portion of my time to volunteer work. I have high hopes for my first year of CNR. I look forward to becoming more cultured and aware of the world around me.



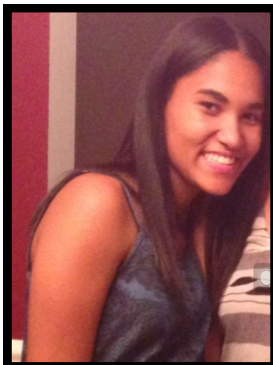
Surya Lorraine Brissett, Art

My name is Surya Lorraine Brissett. I was born in Northampton, England. When I was about one and a half years old, my family moved back to Jamaica, because that was where they were from. My parents settled in Mandeville, which is where I grew up until the end of fourth grade. I completed the rest of my schooling in Westmoreland, Jamaica until I moved on to pursue my next goal: studying the Arts in America. By the end of my first year here, I want to have matured drastically with improvements in my academics and also socially. The College of New Rochelle is a calm and close-knit family unit where everyone works together to improve: this is what makes this college impressive.



Rachel Castillo, Undeclared

Hi everybody! My name is Rachel Castillo. Although I haven't declared a major yet, I have a deep interest in the social sciences and history. Some of the areas I am seriously considering majoring in are: international studies with a concentration in history and economics; political science; and women's studies. I grew up in Long Island and went to the Brentwood schools. College has always been something I take seriously because it is vital to make the life I envision for myself a reality. I hope that CNR will mold me into a person ready to make ripples in the world that will lead to positive change.



Anaudy Figuereo, Psychology

My name is Anaudy Figuereo. My interests are in psychology and nursing. I was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to the United States when I was 9 years old. I attended the high school for Media and Communications and graduated valedictorian. In a few years, I hope to continue my education and become a CRNA (Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist). Currently at CNR, I am part of S.A.M.S, Psyche and Spectrum. Outside of CNR, I volunteer at the New York Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan, where I enjoy talking to my patients and learning something new every day. My favorite organization is the ASPCA: they have inspired me to (in the future) open up my own rescue center for stray and misunderstood breeds of dogs.

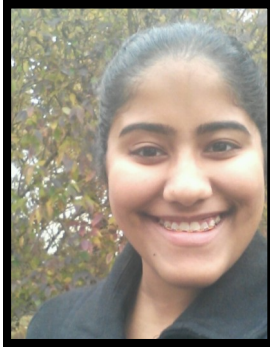


Brionna Grisvenor, Business

My name is Brionna Grosvenor. I am majoring in Business because I want to go into the Fashion Merchandising field, which is the business part of fashion. I grew up in the Maryland/ Washington DC area. During my first year t CNR, I plan to hopefully confirm my decision on majoring Business. I also plan to take most of my pre- requisite classes so I can focus more on my major my next few years. So far at CNR, I am enjoying the closeness my professors are showing me within my classes. They do not treat me like I am just a number. They show me that they want me to succeed and that is something I really appreciate.

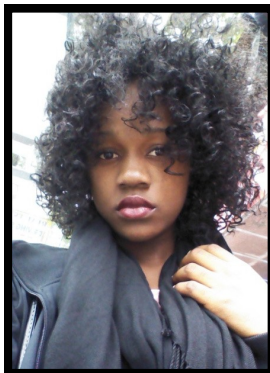
Welcome Class of 2017

2017



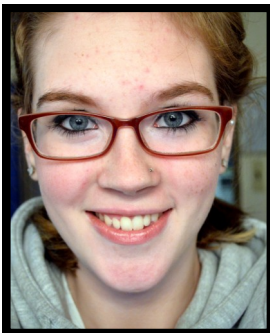
Stacey Mathai, Nursing

Since the age of 7, I have wanted to become a pediatrician. In 2007, when my uncle was hospitalized for a heart attack, I watched the doctors in the hospital. Many of them were rude and didn't show much care. Meanwhile, the nurses were caring and always greeted us with a smile. It was at this point in my life that I made my decision to become a nurse. I chose The College of New Rochelle for two reasons: it accepts AP credits and it has one of the best nursing programs in the state. This year I hope to complete all the prerequisites for nursing so I can begin the nursing core by the first semester of my sophomore year.



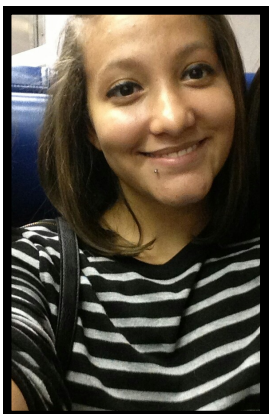
Phedorah Rene, International Studies and English

My name is Phedorah and I am a first year student in the Honors Program. I was born and raised in Haiti and have been in the United States for about three years now. So far, I am gladly enjoying my experience at CNR. I was initially a chemistry major but am now considering a double major in International Studies and English, as well as a minor in Modern and Classical languages. I've gotten involved with both the Gospel and Chapel Choir and am also an Acapellista. Being part of those groups has allowed me to have a deep connection to people I care about and with whom I share common goals and interests. I also love to write (stories, poetry), thus one of the many reason I am majoring in English. I can say I am really looking forward to a wonderful experience here, a handful of learning and fun (or not!)



Dorothy Thackeray, Art Therapy and Psychology

I am an art therapy major and am currently considering a minor in psychology. I have always wanted to help people, especially children. I thought that including my passion for art would be the perfect combination. I grew up in a small town called Belchertown in Massachusetts where nothing really interesting happens. I hope to make bonds with new friends, get to know myself better, and learn as much as I can. So far I'm enjoying the small community that is CNR and all it has to offer. The faculty is so friendly here; it just has a warm and homey atmosphere.



Kaylan Vicente, Art Education

Hello, I'm Kaylan Vicente and I grew up in Hawthorne, New York, only about 20 minutes away from here. I am majoring in Art Education, working towards becoming an art teacher. Every art teacher I had throughout high school encouraged me to take art classes and experiment with new techniques. I noticed so much change within my artwork over my four years in high school, and I wanted to continue seeing it grow. That growth made me want to pursue a career in education; I want to help people interested in art realize what I realized. In my first year of college at CNR, I hope to become more comfortable with college life because the change can be extremely stressful at times. I also hope to really start to get a feel for the major I am pursuing and making sure that it is what I want to do.

"Just Don't Open the Plane Door"

Excerpts from Amelia Ellis's blog on her study abroad experience in France (ameliagoestotours.wordpress.com)

The French Pizza Post

It is 1:48am and I just ordered a giant pizza for myself. I said to myself, "Self, you are going to order in French and everyone will be super proud of you," and then the woman on the other end picked-up the phone and said something I couldn't understand and I said to myself, "Self, let's make people proud another day. Parlez-vous anglais?" I could order in French, I know how to, but it's daunting how quickly people speak French here. I should expect it since it is the native language, but I look like a deer in headlights any time someone comes up to me and asks me things in French: the flight attendants, the man at the baggage claim, the girl on the bus platform, the hotel receptionist, and the room service phone call...

So now the question is: when will I allow myself to speak English to others? I figured for directions in Charles de Gaulle I'd want them in English. I don't want to get lost. But I don't want to let myself off the hook either. How would you feel if you didn't speak English and someone came up to you just speaking English asking for directions like a pompous tourist (which I totally saw happen at the information booth..."Oh, my trip is *ruined*, I tell you!")? So I will make it a point to greet and ask the English question in French before anything else if I am unsure of my ability to communicate in French in a particular setting. When I arrive at the Institut de Touraine, I'm sure I'll be speaking English there as well. Not in the classroom. No. That is a no-no.

2:05am pizza arrives.



Pizza eating would go a lot quicker, but it is not pre-sliced. Haha! I wonder what Italian-Americans would think? Well, there's only one way to eat it now! *taking bite*

I don't feel out of place because of the language barrier, I just feel silly and nervous and caught off-guard.

Tomorrow I'll try out more of what I know. When I'm put on the spot, though, what I know seems to fly out the window.

For now I'm going to eat my pizza with my hands — even though they provided me with a fork and knife.

Mmmmmmm pizza...this pizza cheese puts American pizza cheese to shame.

The First Day of Class Post

Today was my first day of *real* class. I was placed in a high-level intermediate class. Although I am flattered, I am not on the same level as my other classmates; they are definitely ahead of me. I have a lot of work and catching-up to do in order to stay on top of my lessons. I'm curious to know why I was put in that class. I didn't give extraordinary answers on my oral exam and I know the writing portion was definitely flawed — I answered with what I knew! I did want to give an impression that I am all for being courageous and trying to speak in French even if I answer incorrectly or know very little. And it's true! I want the professors to know that I'm not afraid of taking myself out of my comfort zone. But today in this class, I was *really* out of my comfort zone. It's definitely not an ordinary French class. It's quick. Very quick. I felt a little dumb because I was stumped half of the time.

I mean, I've only been studying French for one year and I'm around people at l'Institut de Touraine who on average are already bilingual and French is going to be their third language. I'm slower in comprehension and oral than my other classmates, it's noticeable, and it's a bit discouraging.

I must keep telling myself, though, that I'm fairly new to French, I'm in a learning situation, and I cannot be afraid to make mistakes, and that surely there are others feeling the same way as me; and above all, I will improve. It was a very tiring first day; extremely rigorous and difficult, and having to take my pain medication on top of that — oy vey! Or should I say, oh mon dieu! I must keep a positive energy level up, I must!

Fortunately, I have some friends there now. They aren't just from America (Tera and Amanda), but from Colombia (Manuel) and Korea (Rin) as well. We can commiserate and study together. **Important info for future study abroad students: find a support system among the students.** Allow yourself to be a bit co-dependent on others. It's perfectly alright.

But I did go see a movie with Mme Molineau today! I saw "[Hiroshima mon Amour](#)" written by Margerite Duras and directed by Alain Resnais. It was released in 1959. Ever since I read *The Lover* and *Blue Eyes, Black Hair* by Duras, I've been itching to see "Hiroshima mon Amour." So I

finally saw it! After class, I walked home and took a nap; Mme Molineau was out grocery shopping. Orphée, the cat, curled up right next to me. I woke up in time for Mme Molineau to return and I helped her with the groceries. She shops for organic food only so the potatoes looked like they were just pulled up from the ground, the onions were small (not genetically modified to be giant mutant onions), and the tomatoes were red and healthy. I've been eating very well here. Not quantity, but quality. I've also been introduced to two great foods: fromage blanc (it tastes like plain yogurt but is made like a cheese) and gâteau au prune (plum cake). And I've been eating homemade apricot jam on toast for breakfast. So good!

Anyway, the movie. I wake up and we go to the theatre. I asked for my own ticket in French, asked for the student discount in French, and watched the movie in French without subtitles. I could understand what was going on and I picked up a few words here and there — the movie was just so incredible! The theatre was eerily quiet, though. I'm used to people chewing their popcorn like cows chew their cud (sorry for the image) and slurping soda and whispering to each other, but here...complete silence. Mme Molineau said that this theatre is not a place to eat, but to appreciate art. The movie theatre is called Studio Cinéma and it's on the outskirts of Tours. I had the option of going out with the students at l'Institut for an organized activity, but I was just too beat. The movie suited me well.

There are other opportunities to go out with the class on field trips to visit les chateaux and other landmarks. I also have an option to take an elective class. I want to take Literature, but I'm afraid it'll be too much with what I already have. I'll decide tomorrow.

Amelia sleepy.

The McDonald's Post

Yes, I caved today.

So overcome with hunger and a need to eat gross fast-food (I know...it's shameful), my friend Rin and I decided to go to McDonald's. Now before you accuse me of blaspheming the French food system, let me write this: oh well. We had just gotten out of a difficult class and needed some familiarity. Both of us decided we wanted a hamburger. Okay, let's go to the French burger chain, Quick. We go into Quick and we have no idea what to do. There was a really bizarre menu, and the set-up was odd, and the food didn't look that good, and we said, "Let's just go to McDonald's, that's easy."

We walk two shops down to McDonald's, go in, and immediately a woman comes up to us with an electronic food-ordering device and asks us what we want. Rin and I are totally caught off guard. We finally place our order, the woman gives us our total, and we step aside to get our money ready. Then one of the cashiers asks us, "Are you ready?" And I say, "No, no, no, we've already been helped. Thank you though." About two minutes go by, we're waiting for our food, expecting to pay after the food comes out (because the order in which one orders McDon-

ald's threw us off), and then the woman comes up to us again and very politely says, "You have to pay."

Oh! Well — we go up to the cash register and pay. Done. Two meals at 14,00 euros straight, no tax. We wait by the pick-up counter, Rin and I are talking not one minute when all of a sudden another female employee says, "Excuse me." We turn around and she has our food on a tray, she's smiling, and gives us the tray. "Enjoy!" She goes back behind the counter.

I initially thought the staff was just being nice to us because we were obviously confused as to what was happening when we first walked in. But no. Rin and I sat down, and low and behold: people were being served their McDonald's. Trays were brought over, tables were constantly being cleaned; it was like an actual restaurant.

Then I take a bite of the burger. Never have I had such a healthy tasting McDonald's burger (an oxymoron: healthy/McDonald's) in my life. Not a drip of grease fell from that burger! Then I eat some fries. Delish. Warm, crispy, perfect amount of salt. I'm here to tell you that McDonald's-France was the smartest fast-food decision I've ever made.

It's official. France does McDonald's better, and McDonald's is an American chain.

sigh



The “Final” Post

I get my grades tomorrow (bof!).

It’s gonna be...humbling... *bracing myself*

I put up a fine effort, though, and I’ll always know that I tried my hardest. I really did. Never have I had to do something so academically challenging in one of my weaker subjects. But would I do it again?

Absolutely.

There’s an anxiety that is attached to a difficult subject because in the back of your mind you’re trying to push away the, “If you don’t get an A, you have failed” mantra; struggling, trying to just enjoy the process of learning without thinking of “failure,” going back and forth between what you feel is right for you and what you feel is right for your academic GPA — it’s absolutely paralyzing... and I think that has been one of the biggest personal challenges for me this month. I knew the course would be difficult, but to physically see and mentally feel myself struggle I started to think about letting my family down, my professors down; I thought that to the instructors here, I was, for lack of a better word, an idiot. Yes, I cried about it. It was frustrating not being able to understand or catch on as quickly as other people; to have to ask for someone to repeat a phrase 5 times before I could get it. Until finally I was just so bummed out that I said, “I just want to enjoy what I’m learning, take it for what it is, and improve. I’m here to

learn and better my French for myself, not impress anyone.” After that first week, I started to arrive at a certain point of acceptance, where I understood that all I *could* do was my best, and my own personal goals came back into sight: the cultural understanding; the joy of discovering common words in the French and English language; being one step closer to reading *Swann’s Way* in its original French; having the proper tools to be the best (Comparative) Literature teacher I can be. It remained difficult in content, but I finally felt progress being made: baby steps — very satisfying baby steps — and I could finally enjoy that progress because I let my grade-anxiety go...I’m hoping to take this philosophy back with me to CNR.

I’m proud of myself and the diploma and whatever notes I receive tomorrow because I put my heart and soul into this, I learned a lot, had so many amazing experiences, and can say that I, Amelia Grace Ellis, with only two semesters of French under my belt (Bonjour, Dr. Beauzethier, et merci!), made it through a Level 6 (B1/B++) 20+ hrs./wk intensive French program in France with people who have taken French for an average of three years. Boo-yah! (I never said I lost my competitive spirit.)

Of course, a different anxiety has taken the place of my grade-anxiety: the plane door. Please. Don’t open the plane door mid-flight, or early-flight, or whenever flight. Open it to let me in, and open it to let me out. In the correct country.



l’Institut de Touraine

Teaching in the LLC

Dr. Jorge Medina, Assistant Professor of Economics

Teaching The First-Year Experience at the Honors Living-Learning Community has been a unique and positive experience. This course introduces students to the liberal arts through the theme of “Voices in Conversation,” and it is focused on developing students’ academic abilities in terms of critical thinking, expression of ideas, oral and written communication of arguments, and the ability to make connections among different fields of study, and approaches to learning.

Students in this course meet three times a week. On Fridays we have small discussion sessions at the LLC, where we discuss the presentations we had during our Common Experience meetings on Wednesday. Our Friday usually begins with us sitting and discussing the presentation we had that week, its connection to our common reading, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, and ideas or questions that might have come up during the presentation on Wednesday.

A particularly important aspect of the LLC is its versatility. It has a brand new Sharp interactive display and tables for students to sit and take notes, which makes the LLC as efficient as a regular classroom. It also has lounge furniture for a more comfortable and integrative setting for learning. The LLC even has a kitchen, which reiterates the purpose of the space: living and learning.

The LLC has given me the opportunity to engage students in a different way than in a regular classroom particularly because of its versatility and its non-classroom environment. The setting at the LLC gives students a certain level of comfort that allows them to be just a little less shy about sharing their voice and ideas. It has also allowed me to approach my teaching differently by fostering critical thinking and academic conversation through forming a group without a predominant leader in which we all contribute to our learning by sharing questions, experiences, and ideas as they relate to our discussions.

Spring Seminars

In addition to the second halves of both senior seminar (HON 491) and junior colloquium (HON 386), this spring sees the return of two favorite seminars to the selection of Honors courses. Dr. Roblyn Rawlins will offer **Gender & Sexuality** as part of the “Topics in Identity” rotation, open to both first-year-students and sophomores. The seminar features a selection of provocative readings to focus on the social, psychological, ethical, political, and personal dimensions of gender and sexuality. Why and how, the seminar asks, are sexualities more than just natural “urges” or “drives”? How has sexuality historically been practiced and politicized? How are sexualities socially constructed? How does gender influence the meanings of sexuality? What is desire all about?

In **Discourses of Slavery in the Americas**, Dr. Nereida Segura-Rico will harness the heightened interest in the “peculiar institution” garnered by recent films such as *Twelve Years a Slave* and *Django Unchained* to analyze how slaves overcame a system that, in the words of memoirist Juan Francisco Manzano, considered them as “dead beings.” Mixing personal narratives with films, anti-slavery novels and contemporary fiction, this seminar explores the similarities and differences among distinct cultures of slavery in the Americas, asking most centrally: How do these works depict the figure of the slave? How do they present the impact of slavery in their different societies? How do current political, social, and economic conditions influence artistic representations of the slave past?

The New York City Experience

Right: Amanda Hernandez, Ramya Bharti, Rashaa Parker, LeeAnn Daley, Manuela Patino, Lena Fin, Symone White, Miranda Polat, and



On November 24, Honors students from The College of New Rochelle flooded New York City. Members of Dr. Sue Canning's Honors colloquium, *The Body*, visited the Brooklyn Museum to see **Wangechi Mutu's** exhibit **"A Fantastic Journey."** The Brooklyn-based artist drew upon her Kenyan roots to explore African traditions, gender politics, colonialism, and the fashion industry. In midtown Manhattan, members of Dr. Jorge Medina's "First Year Experience" seminar and Daniel Smith's "American Anxieties" seminar took in **"Little Miss Sunshine,"** a musical based on the Oscar-nominated film. After the show, the students and faculty were treated to a private question-and-answer session with Tony-nominated actor Rory O'Malley.



Left: Honors students Claudia Benitez, Meagan Yoeno, Katy Baudendistal, and Kayla Cummings take their seats at Little Miss Sunshine.

Senior Symposium is Reading.....

Do you have the desire to pick up a good book? Take a look at what the members of HON 490, Senior Symposium, are reading. Titles include:

- ♦ Edit Wharton, *The House of Mirth*
- ♦ Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Tale of Henrietta Lacks*
- ♦ Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In*
- ♦ E.L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*
- ♦ John Green, *The Fault in our Stars*

